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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SF](#)
SUBJECT: BIO NOTES ON DA LEADER HELEN ZILLE

REF: CAPE TOWN 0240

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Catherine Kay. Reasons 1.4(b)
) and (d).

¶1. (C) Paul Boughey, Chief of Staff for Democratic Alliance (DA) leader Helen Zille, talked to PolOffs on 26 September about the first few months working for Zille. Boughey, who used to work for former DA Leader Tony Leon, admitted that working for Zille has been challenging, but not necessarily in a bad way. He described Zille as "an impulsive decision maker, which makes it difficult to manage her." For example, he joked, "she'll call me and say she's just been arrested (reftel)." (NOTE: Zille was arrested on 9 September after participating in a march against drug lords and then going to a police station to check on one of the protesters who was arrested for knocking on the door of a known drug dealer. According to Boughey, Zille is scheduled to appear in court on 26 October for contravening the Illegal Gatherings Act. Boughey said that a crowd did not accompany Zille to the police station as reported and that he believes the charges are political, arguing that the police chief in Mitchell's Plain is an ANC stalwart. END NOTE)

¶2. (C) Boughey, current Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sandra Botha, and even Botha's personal assistant also bragged about Zille's workaholic tendencies, all the while using words like "obsessive and compulsive." Botha's assistant says she regularly receives emails from Zille dated 3 a.m. The Institute for Democracy in South Africa's political analyst Jonathan Faull told PolOffs on 25 September that Zille's husband Johann Maree (who is sometimes referred to as Mr. Zille), has said that if Zille licked envelopes for a living, she would still work for 16 hours a day.

¶3. (C) Apart from Zille's strong work ethic, Boughey and Faull separately mentioned that DA officials believe Zille offers the party a clean slate which they never had with Leon. Boughey described Zille's background as an investigative journalist (she famously exposed the truth behind Steve Biko's death) and member of Black Sash almost with relief when compared to what he called "Leon's baggage." Boughey said that South Africans have an image of Leon in their head "shooting children in a township out of a helicopter, even though that never happened."

¶4. (C) Zille also has become somewhat of a media-darling since taking over the DA. Botha on 27 September called Zille "the most high-profile politician in South Africa right now." Though this is somewhat exaggerated given the upcoming ANC national conference and succession race, Zille was named Newsmaker of the Year 2006 by the National Press Club in Pretoria on 11 July 2007. Zille also makes herself readily available to journalists for comment, despite her busy

schedule, which is in stark contrast to the ANC's strained relationship with the media.
Teitelbaum